



YOUTH IN EAST PRUSSIA

Cover photograph from  
W. Engelhardt: "Ein Memelbilderbuch"  
Verlag Grenze und Ausland, Berlin

## YOUTH IN THE FRONTIER LANDS

*Its Sacrifices and its Privileges*

A PART from a small part of Alsace, East Prussia was the only district of the Reich which shared the experiences of Belgium and northern France during the War. The youth of East Prussia alone knew what it meant to have their homeland laid waste by the sword. Not only did we live in constant anxiety as to the fate of our fathers who were fighting against a five-fold foe on the frontier, the fate of our homeland hung in the balance as well for it was rumoured that the whole province, up to the Vistula, would fall into the hands of the enemy. Towns and estates fell daily under the advance of the Russian steamroller and were laid in ashes. What a picture of horror that was! Towns, villages and houses that one knew all shot to pieces, the whole land a smoking ruin.

We children knew for the first time the meaning of deadly fear and perhaps, as far as that is possible to the German heart, of hatred too. Instead of enjoying the calm, untroubled days of youth we were brought face to face with the grimmest reality. That which our whole generation experienced—the fight to save the jeopardised homeland—was brought home to us in a way which even the youth in the Rhineland during the period of occupation did not have it brought home to them. As a result of the sufferings we had to endure we have reached a deeper understanding of what it is that our country means to us and the years that have gone between have ripened it to a passionate love for that country, a love of which we are now, perhaps for the first time, fully conscious. That is the reason why—as we say in our group —“Never was this Germany, this German land, so loved as we of the frontier love it and must love it.”

*E. Günther Gründel*





## YOUTH HOSTELS IN EAST PRUSSIA

THOSE who look after the Jugendherbergen in East Prussia say with modest pride that they have been gratified by the recognition and thanks they have received from those visiting them from elsewhere. This recognition is well justified, for the task was difficult enough. East Prussia is a country of great charm but of long distances and, especially in the South, it is thinly populated. This solitude and natural beauty are a great attraction to the wanderer but the poverty of the country has made the work harder. Those responsible have had to husband their financial resources and place the hostels with the greatest care at those points where they will be most needed by visitors from other parts of the Reich. This is the first

consideration, for East Prussia, isolated as it is, is in constant need of spiritual support from the Reich.

It is only quite recently, mainly since 1927, that the work has reached a stage when it is beginning adequately to fulfil its functions. Since that date a number of really fine hostels have been built or converted.

The main route for wanderers touches the castles of the Teutonic Knights. Marienburg now has a large hostel which frequently heads the list of those visited. The castle at Marienwerder also draws great numbers but until recently most travellers were apt to make the journey between the two by train. Lately a hostel has been built on a historic site at Weissenberg where the frontiers of the Free City of Danzig, East Prussia, and the Polish Corridor meet. This is a key position and the extensive view over the river and delta of the Vistula gives even the most thoughtless an insight into the impracticability of the enforced frontier whereby East Prussia's trade highway, the Vistula, has been entirely cut off and placed in Polish hands. It is a pleasure to stay in so modern and so admirably planned a hostel as this one is, and the gap it fills allows the exploration of the whole length of the incredible frontier to be made on foot from here to Marienwerder.

There are many other admirable modern hostels that lie on the route usually followed. Königsberg itself has a fine new one and the one at Elbing is especially striking. This is attractive architecturally, made in the form of a tower.

Every outsider is impressed by the amount of new buildings in the country, not only in those parts devastated in the War, and it is good that the Youth Hostels have been able to share in this architectural development. Converted hostels are seldom satisfactory. Elbing's hostel is one of the most modern.





Bound for the East

Between the Vistula and the Masurian lakes, on the route usually followed, stands the Tannenberg Memorial. To appreciate the significance of Tannenberg to Germany and to Europe one should pay more than a fleeting visit to the memorial and the surrounding battlefields. Only a short distance away, at Hohenstein, a large new Youth Hostel is being built, which will be completed in 1936. The former Youth Hostel in the Memorial itself no longer exists.

Masuria with its innumerable lakes is a paradise for the wanderer by boat and on foot. Lötzen is an excellent centre and has a fine modern hostel by the water. Another new Youth Hostel has been built on the Niedersee, in the centre of Masuria. But if one wants to find "The Perfect Hostel", one should choose the Lallka hostel on the Lansker See. The interior planning and management are exemplary and the site is unique. It is situated on a peninsula running out into the lake and is thus almost surrounded by water; high up on the bank, it has a lovely view over the lake.

A visit to this hostel is likely to prove the central point of the whole trip. If the traveller can sit for a moment at sunset in front of the hostel and look out west over the lake at the setting sun at the time when the bell there is tolled in memory of the fallen he cannot fail to be captivated by the wild charm of Masuria.

Besides Masuria, the Castles and the Vistula most hikers will try and see something of the Amber coast, the Samland with its great wandering dunes. For the Kurische Nehrung there are hostels at Sarkau and Rossitten and any wanderer from afar should include the Nehrung in a tour of East Prussia. One has no idea—and it is hard to convey it—how impressive and relentless wandering dunes may be when they are on this scale, quite unique in the world.

For those who have more time a thorough exploration of Masuria will be an unforgettable experience and the friendly Jugendherberge headquarters of the southern district will give advice and information. Allenstein, where there is a large and well equipped hostel, well deserves a visit not only on account of the museum in the castle but also to see the Plebiscite memorial which commemorates the time when in 1920 Masuria so decisively voted to remain part of Germany.

If the wanderer has time to explore further east in the Rominter Heide, he may find that in some cases hostels are rather far apart but that is inevitable at present. There are gaps to be filled.

On the main route, however, where we have touched at a few of the most interesting spots, hostels will now be found, and those too of a high standard, at convenient distances. In opening up this part of the country to the wanderer those responsible have done their difficult task wisely and well and we congratulate them while taking advantage of their labours.

*F. C. Gerald Gough*



THE TOWERS OF DANZIG

*As early as 1388, King Richard II. of England exchanged letters with the Lord Mayor of Danzig about trade relationships. In 1392, a time of a great emergency, no fewer than 300 English ships were loading corn in Danzig at one time. The signatures of many other monarchs including those of Henry VIII., Queen Elizabeth, William III. and Queen Anne may be seen on important state documents, also a letter from Oliver Cromwell. In 1706 an English church, where services are still held regularly, was opened in Danzig.*

## LEARNING ENGLISH IN EAST PRUSSIA

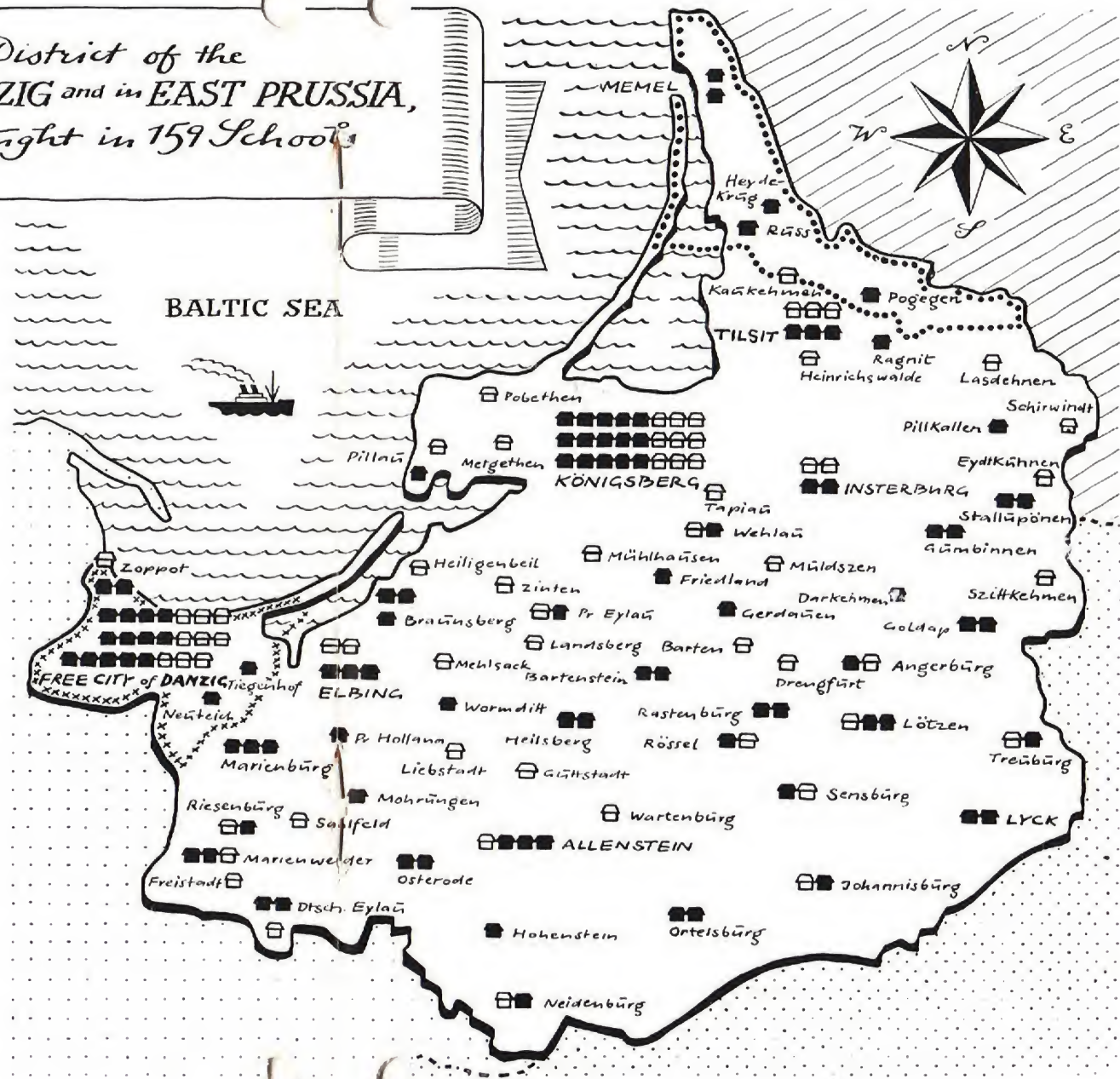
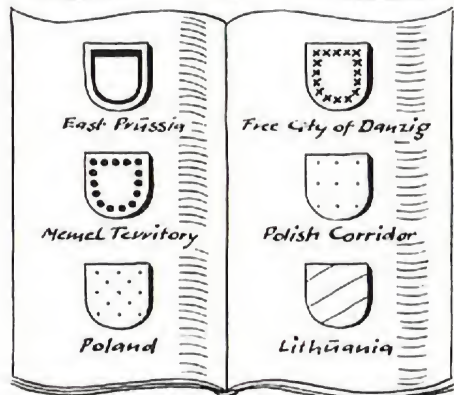
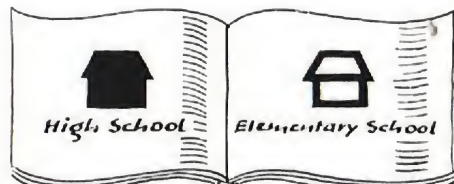
ONE of the most eloquent signs that the people of East Prussia feel themselves an eastern outpost of West-European civilisation is the remarkable popularity of English as a subject of study in the schools. The 159 schools in East Prussia and the district of the Free City of Danzig, in which English is taught, are shown on the map on the following pages. Throughout the detached province — which stands as a bridge-head facing the East, with the Polish Corridor in the rear — there are at least 75 high schools in which the English language and literature are taught. The number of students attending the English classes in those high schools amounts to the grand total of 10,495. Take for example the old city of Tilsit, the last eastern outpost of Germany. Tilsit has only 58,000 inhabitants, but in 14 classes of the municipal boys' school 536 boys are learning English. The proportion among the girls is still higher — 1135 pupils in 34 classes. In the 5 classes of the two municipal commercial schools there are 135 students of English.

The aggregate number of teachers of English in these 75 high schools is 258. This means that nearly every school has several teachers of English. Of these 258 teachers 101 have lived for some time in England: 24 within the years 1905-14, one was a war prisoner in England, 23 have gone there within the years 1924-27, 43 from 1928-31 and 10 from 1932-34.

Thirty-three high schools or nearly half the total number report that their pupils exchange letters either with England or the United States of America. And it is interesting to note that, whereas 298 pupils exchange letters with the U.S.A., the number that exchange letters with England is only 61.



*In the District of the  
FREE CITY of DANZIG and in EAST PRUSSIA,  
English is taught in 159 Schools*







KURISCHE NEHRUNG  
Painting by Prof. Burmann

## MEMEL

THAT part of East Prussia which lies north of the river Memel is now known as the "Memel Territory". Under the Treaty of Versailles it was taken away from Germany. The people were not allowed to have any say in the matter and the district was administered by the French for the Allied and Associated Powers from 1920 on. In January 1923 the Lithuanians invaded and seized the Memel Territory. After lengthy discussions the territory was placed under the sovereignty of Lithuania, but with the express reservation that it should retain its territorial autonomy. The rights thus granted to the territory were embodied in the Memel Statute.

The territory takes its name from the river and the city of Memel. The Memel river, with its many tributaries, is one of the most important waterways in eastern Europe. Its banks are covered with vast forests and before the War thousands of rafts conveyed the timber down the river to the Kurische Haff and thence to the city of Memel.

Memel is the oldest German city in East Prussia. It was founded in 1252 by members of the German Order of the Brethren of the Sword who lived in Riga. As a trading settlement it was ideally situated from every point of view. At that time only the Haff, the Nehrung, and the delta of the Memel were settled; the rest of the country was a wilderness of moors, heaths, and forests. The inhabitants of the western and northern sections were Courlanders (Letts); in the south lived the Prussians. Memel has never belonged to Lithuania. It was only in the course of the centuries that Lithuanians began to emigrate to and settle in the district.

The city of Memel has the only ice-free natural harbour in the Baltic. For this reason it developed into an important maritime and trading city. At the time when the sailing ship flourished the city employed more than 800 ships. In former times there was a considerable trade in amber, wax, flax, and furs; the principal article of commerce, however, has always been wood. About





Village near Memel

600,000 cubic metres of wood a year were cut up in the saw-mills, of which there are still 19, and sent to various countries, especially to England. The trade with England was so extensive that many Englishmen settled in Memel. There were large English communities and they even had their own church. This church still stands and is now in the possession of the city. After the decline of the sailing ship the commercial connections with England also declined but still exist to this day. There are still English and Scotch families in Memel such as the Pitcairns, the Plaws, the Ogivils and the Gubbas.

Since the War, however, Memel's timber trade has declined very severely. As a result of the political tension between Lithuania and Poland there has been a block in the traffic on the Memel. Whereas in the old days one could scarcely see the water for rafts, nowadays one can scarcely see the rafts for the water. This state of affairs is not only unnatural but illegal, since, under the Memel Convention, Lithuania is obliged to afford all facilities to the traffic on the waterways to and from



Hundreds of elk live in this territory

the port of Memel without regard to the present difficulties between Lithuania and Poland. This provision has never been carried out. The present state of affairs cannot, however, be allowed to continue permanently.

The city of Memel has about 50,000 inhabitants whereas the agrarian population numbers about 100,000, so that the territory is principally agrarian. The incorporation of the territory with Lithuania has had an especially bad effect on the workers and on the farmers and peasants. In Lithuania there are no social services and this has resulted in an enormous immigration of Lithuanians into the Memel Territory. They have a lower standard of living and are ready to work for less than the native inhabitants. Since Lithuania is a purely agrarian country Memel no longer has the market it formerly had. A small amount of bacon and butter is exported to England. On market days the Lithuanians swarm into Memel with their produce and even the Memel fishermen have a hard time getting rid of their catches. For this reason living is very cheap in Memel.





Old occupations are carried on today

The surroundings of Memel—the Nehrung and the Haff, sea and forests—are exceptionally beautiful and the seaside resorts on the Baltic and the Nehrung are always full of visitors in the summer. One of the great attractions is the elk. There are hundreds of these animals on the Nehrung and the visitors are always fascinated by these relics of an earlier age. Sometimes they swim from the Nehrung to the mainland, a distance of several miles.

The inhabitants of the Memel Territory are partly of German and partly of Lithuanian extraction, but they differ completely from the inhabitants of Lithuania. For more than six centuries they have been a part of German civilization. They are all Protestants, while the inhabitants of Lithuania are Roman Catholics. Even the Lithuanian language as spoken in Memel differs considerably from that spoken in Lithuania. After centuries of living side by side with one another Lithuanians and Germans can no longer be distinguished from each other. Only



Lighthouse Memel

some 10 per cent evince a preference for the customs and culture of Lithuania. As a result of the Russian rule Lithuania has remained more than a century behind the Memel Territory. The traveller today notices the striking change when he crosses the former Russo-German frontier into present-day Lithuania. As an international study commission reported in 1923, Memel lies on the frontier between two worlds. On the one side is German, on the other Russian culture. It was "for the protection of the traditional rights and culture of the inhabitants" that Memel received her statute of autonomy. Lithuania is doing all in her power to make the inhabitants renounce these traditional rights and culture for the backward civilization east of the frontier.

*Richard Meyer*

Vice President of the Memel Diet





A STORK'S NEST IN THE MEMEL TERRITORY

THE accompanying picture is a remarkable instance of a stork's nest, but it is characteristic of the Memel Territory. In East Prussia storks are very prevalent. In the districts of Heydekrug and Memel seven hundred and ninety-six families of storks were recently counted, of which three hundred and ninety-six had their nests in buildings and four hundred had their nests in trees. In the province of East Prussia, south of the Memel river, eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-five families of storks were counted, of which eight thousand seven hundred and thirty-seven had their nests on sheds, outhouses and dwelling houses, whereas only five hundred and forty-seven had built their nests in trees. The tree-nesting habit is therefore characteristic of the storks who inhabit the Memel Territory.

*Traveller's Maps  
of  
East Prussia*



① Weichselland

⑦ Samland

② Frische Nehrung  
and Haffküste

⑧ Kŭrische  
Nehrung

③ Oberland

⑨ Memelniederŭng  
and Moosbrŭch

④ Ermland

⑩ Rominter Heide

⑤ Masŭren

⑪ Danzig

⑥ Königsberg and  
Environs

⑫ Memel Territory



EDITED BY KARL KIESEL  
PUBLISHED BY THE TERRAMARE OFFICE, BERLIN  
REPRINTED FROM  
"LOOKING EAST—GERMANY BEYOND THE VISTULA"